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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: AN UNHAPPY EID; REACTIONS TO SADDAM,S EXECUTION

REF: A) 06 AMMAN 8303 B) 06 AMMAN 8754 C) 05 AMMAN 6240

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Many Jordanians we hear from are disturbed and resentful after Saddam's hanging. Opposition political parties and the professional associations staged a non-violent demonstration, while a number of condolence events took place in Kerak, Salt, and the Baq'a and Wihdat Palestinian refugee camps. End Summary.

An Unhappy Eid

[1](#)2. (C) According to a number of contacts, many Jordanians scaled back their Eid celebrations, shocked by the timing of Saddam's execution, and by the sectarian vengeance many perceived in the footage of the execution. Emboffs heard repeated comments to the effect that Saddam may have been a tyrant, but he behaved better than his executioners at the end. Electronic depictions of Saddam with the label, "The Last Honorable Man" were passed among some Jordanians from cell phone to cell phone. The timing of Saddam's hanging was the focal point for many. Some interpreted it as a deliberate sign of disrespect towards Sunnis by Shi'a leaders in Iraq, while others focused their blame on the U.S., perceiving an attempt to demoralize Muslims at the start of the Muslim holidays.

Saddam's Daughter Makes an Appearance

[1](#)3. (C) Opposition political parties staged a licensed sit-in on January 1 at the Professional Associations headquarters to protest the execution. Minister of Political Development Mohammad Oran attended and was shown on Al Jazeera weeping over Saddam's death. COMMENT: Oran was appointed in the November, 2006 cabinet reshuffle in a gesture toward the opposition (ref B). Because of Oran's record of pronounced anti-American behavior, the Ambassador has had no contact with the new minister; there are no USAID dollars going to his ministry. His attendance at this sit-in was undoubtedly a personal gesture and does not reflect a position by the government, which has remained silent except for an early official statement on the day of the execution (see para 5). END COMMENT. Saddam's eldest daughter Raghda Hussein (resident in Jordan since April 2003) ref C) also appeared briefly at the sit-in. She thanked the demonstrators and called her father a martyr. NOTE: To post's knowledge, this appearance was Raghda's first political, public appearance since coming to Jordan. END NOTE. Meanwhile the Jordanian Professional Associations issued a statement calling December 30 a "black day."

Media Coverage

¶4. (SBU) Footage of the hanging was widely viewed, including the cell-phone stream that showed the taunts from the crowd at the foot of the gallows, and Saddam's retorts. Ayman Safadi, the chief editor of Al-Ghad, a centrist, independent Arabic daily, published an editorial entitled, "Vengeance and Not Justice" on January 3. "This made Saddam Hussein a legend...in the final scene Saddam appeared as a leader and his executioners as small-time begrudging sectarianists," he wrote. Safadi continued, "It was a moment of vengeance and not a moment of justice...Saddam Hussein ruled his people with an iron fist. He oppressed and killed. Yet, those who killed him also oppress and kill. It is a link in a series of oppression where only the protagonists change while the crimes endure. It is not justice then, rather more injustice."

Early Official Statement

¶5. (SBU) Government Spokesman Nasser Joudah issued a statement on December 30 expressing the GOJ's "hope that there will be no negative consequences for the hanging of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein that would affect the unity and solidarity of the Iraqi people."

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